

SOCIALIST STUDIES

NO. 14

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**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT
BRITAIN**

**Communications to: General Secretary, 71 Ashbourne Court
Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB**

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

ONE PERSISTENT QUESTION

One persistent question faced by our speakers is 'How will Socialism Work?' A particular favourite in Hyde Park, but by no means only coming from those who perhaps for the first time have heard the Socialist case. At two of our recent debates, both opponents - particularly the one from the Conservative Party - were unable to envisage a social system without all the trimmings and indeed fundamentals that are part of the capitalist set-up. Not surprising perhaps, as these two opponents, like our ordinary questioner, are products of an economic system and its propaganda machine that, united, pumps forth the message that the way we live to-day, whilst acknowledging its faults, is really the only manner in which society can operate. That a world based upon exploitation; buying and selling; profits for the few and problems for the many; war; starvation in the midst of potential plenty is the natural order of things. This we deny. So what is it we are after, and can it indeed work?

Our aim as a political party - in fact our only aim - is the establishment of a new way of life; a new way of mankind co-operating together to solve the social problems that confront us, and building a more sane way of organising affairs. The basis of Socialism is the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution. These means are not figments of our imagination. We know them; we see them and most of us work in them. The factories, and the offices, the mills; the channels of communication that have changed so much over recent years; the various forms of transport; the mines and other sources of energy,

etc. In other words, in Socialism, these means whereby we live would be owned by the whole of society. At the moment these very means are owned by a small section of the population - the capitalist class - and used to further their privileged position of riches and power.

In a socialist society many of the day to day events or phenomena would disappear: buying and selling; the wages system; money; useless and non-productive jobs; class and different political parties. Our aim is for production to be carried on for one reason, and one reason alone, namely: to satisfy the needs of mankind. Its establishment and for it to operate successfully rests upon a majority of men and women, realising that capitalism has failed, taking the necessary conscious political action to capture control of the machinery of government and strip the minority class of its ownership. They will also have realised the implications of Socialism and the need for world wide co-operation, as it cannot be established in one country. It is a global solution for global problems.

So far so good, but it still does not tell us how it will work, nor can we give a detailed plan. The actual nuts and bolts of how it will work will be determined in a democratic way by members of society when they take the revolutionary step for the change over. But we do have some ideas, and if we did not then a lot of the excitement in putting forward the Socialist case would be denied us.

One question put by our Tory opponent in the recent debate was "How is London Transport going to operate - who is going to run it?" A fair comment, and you might like to consider the following points, and maybe add some of your own ideas. First of all, how

does London Transport operate to-day and who runs it? For the sake of our argument, let us lump the Underground, the buses and suburban parts of British Rail together. As an organisation it is run by thousands of workers, doing a variety of jobs. There are the Managers in overall charge who have to ensure that a network of transportation is kept running, within a given investment programme, and overall, to make a reasonable return on the capital involved. They are subject to various demands and restrictions imposed by Central Government and local Councils. One important aspect of their work is to ensure as far as is humanly possible to transport hundreds of thousands of workers to their places of work, roughly between the hours of, say, 7 to 10 am. There are the train and bus drivers, guards, conductors, ticket collectors, booking office clerks, engineers, mechanics, etc. They are well known, as millions of workers use the system or its counterparts in other cities. All these workers try and keep the operation functioning, even if in some instances they only have at their disposal some rolling stock and other equipment that has long passed its 'sell by date'. Yet, with so much against them, including onerous working conditions and a wages system that is always a source of contention, it functions. The operation does from time to time grind to a halt, as strike action is taken by some workers. As for the travelling public, they have to make the best of a bad job - there is no alternative, and their anger is often vented against the workers particularly when there is a strike. A reasonable picture of L.T. to-day, we would claim.

So, who would run it in a Socialist society? Not knowing exactly what technological advances will have been achieved by the time Socialism is established, we can only make some general observations. But one thing is certain. When Socialism has been established L.T. will be run by those who run it now or their

successors. Is there any reason that, because a social revolution has been achieved by class conscious workers, they will lose all their ability to run trams, etc or their desire to contribute something that is useful and necessary for the common good? It would make little sense to put a former bank clerk in charge of a signal box, or an insurance agent on the footplate of the 8.15 Watford to Euston. It is not just a question of who is going to run this particular form of transport, but the conditions under which they will be running it.

Under the conditions of Socialism will it really be necessary for a huge number of workers to reach central London within the restricted hours already mentioned? Even capitalism is seeing the benefits of staggered working hours. Would a socialist society put up with the horrendous conditions of the present rush hour? Surely mankind is capable of ordering his affairs better than this.

Our question opens up a whole new field of conjecture. Shall we need train drivers? Many train services operate without them. We shall certainly not need booking office clerks, or ticket inspectors. Travel will be a service freely available for all. Are our ideas are too simplistic? If so, let us have your comments.

But at this stage of our development, whilst it is a pleasant exercise to wonders how things might work, our important task is getting men and women to see that capitalism cannot solve the problems of society and that only a complete change in its fabric can give us hope for the future. In asking "who would run London Transport?" our Tory opponent was really saying that people can only work if they are forced by the wages system or the search for profit. The fact that human society has survived and developed over thousands of years before capitalism came on the scene belies that point of view.

THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTIONARIES WITH THE JUDAS TOUCH

The two letters published below were sent to us by the Edmonton County Court and formed part of the evidence at the re-hearing at which the Clapham based Socialist Party attempted to seize the funds in our bank account, on Monday 24th October 1994. In order to boost the morale of their flagging membership, the Clapham party misrepresented the proceedings in their E.C. minutes, as a dispute over the use of the name "**The Socialist Party of Great Britain**". It was a deliberate attempt to deceive their own members into believing that at long last they were taking action to protect (their?) intellectual property vested in the name **The Socialist Party of Great Britain**.

In fact the sole issue in dispute in the court case was the ownership of £75.00. For this sum they were prepared to betray fellow members of the working class to the state authorities for not paying income tax or council tax, and even worse to accuse them of fraud and criminal deception, both of which involve prison sentences.

Mr. Buick, General Secretary of the Socialist Party, in his latest role as citizen come public informant will undoubtedly defend his actions on the ground that the means justify the end. The end in this case being the suppression of The Socialist Party of Great Britain by the use of the capitalist state machine to achieve this purpose. Their vicious and vindictive actions can only have this evil purpose in mind.

The absurd allegations of fraud and criminal deception in the letters were totally rejected by the Judge who said that these were matters for a police investigation. The Clapham spokesman, Mr. G Slapper, admitted that they had already gone to the police and that the police had decided to await the outcome of the civil action before commencing an enquiry. **There is no disguising the fact that this was an attempt to have our General Secretary, C. May and other comrades prosecuted for criminal deception.** In reply to a question from the judge, Mr. Slapper also stated that the Clapham party was a registered charity. When asked to produce the registration number, not surprisingly, he was unable to do so! Needless to say they lost the case and the money was returned to us the cheque being made payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain".

As to the ownership of the name "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" and the legal position, The Socialist Party of Great Britain of 52 Clapham High Street is defunct. It is no longer a political party. Members of that organisation are forbidden to use that name in propaganda under pain of expulsion.

Mr. Buick and his associates (against the wishes of their Party Poll) have decided to resurrect the name The Socialist Party of Great Britain for the opportunist purpose of pursuing us through the courts for our money. **The Socialist Party of Great Britain** was a name which they rejected and an organisation which they robbed of its essential political function, and consigned to the oblivion of a mere address slot.

That we restored that organisation to its original political role by re-constituting the party on 11th June 1991 is a matter of historical

record. We suspect that the Clapham party clings to the title for two reasons: first to stifle its voice; second to reap any goodwill the SPGB has built up over the years in the form of bequests from those dead workers who believe that The Socialist Party of Great Britain of 52 Clapham High Street, is still a political party. They hope to deceive the living and thereby benefit from the dead.

The letters printed below are reproduced as facsimiles so that we cannot be accused of falsifying them or quoting out of context. The letters speak for themselves and they show the true purpose behind the Socialist Party's actions ; that is to suppress a genuine socialist party. That is the fascist objective of the Clapham party. They cannot face our criticism of their party in open debate so they try to close us down by calumny and deceit, with the help of the capitalist legal system. Needless to say they will fail miserably.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

HEAD OFFICE
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4 7UN
Tel: 01-622 3811

OBJECT:
The establishment of a network of socialist based on the common principles and objectives contained in the manifesto and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of the whole community.

Please reply to:

Head of Legal Department,
Britannia Building Society,
PO Box 20,
Newtow House,
Leek,
Staffordshire,
ST13 5RG

14 January, 1993

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has come to our attention that an individual or group of individuals has opened an account with your building society in our name and is appealing for funds on the basis of being this organisation.

From the attached, it appears that one of the individuals concerned is Mr. Cyril E. May (one of whose addresses we know to be 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SE) and that the account number is 059756614.

We are sure that the manager of your local branch who accepted this account acted in good faith and that the entire responsibility lies with Mr. May and any associates. We understand that it is not possible to open an account in the name of an organisation without producing its constitution, the minute of the meeting relating to the decision to open an account, and the signatures of the duly appointed officials. We certify by the present that Mr. May was not authorised to open an account in our name and that any documents he may have produced in order to do so were not authentic.

We have been advised that the opening of this account is a very serious matter possibly involving the criminal offences of attempting to gain property (money) by deception and conspiracy to defraud. We therefore formally request that the account be closed immediately.

monthly OFFICIAL JOURNAL THE SOCIALIST STANDARD

and that the money in it be remitted to us.

I enclose verification of our identity as a bona fide political party that has been established since 1904 and which has long had a bank account under the name "The Socialist Party of Great Britain".

I remain at your disposition for any further information you may require.

Yours faithfully,

Adam Buick

Adam Buick
General Secretary

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

HEAD OFFICE
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4 7UN
Tel. 01-622 3811

OBJECT
The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth,
and in the interests of the whole community.

Please reply to:

District Judge Morely,
The Edmonton County Court,
95 Fore Street,
London,
N1R 2TN

3 October, 1994

Dear Sir,

The Socialist Party of Great Britain v. Britannia Building Society

Case No. ED 400 825

We are intervenors in this action. Further to my letter and documentation of 2nd September, I am writing to enclose further documents in support of our claim to be the organisation entitled to use the name "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" as we have done since 1904. This point is, of course, especially important in relation to the receiving of money under that title and to matters of probate.

To corroborate our claim that we are the organisation legally entitled to use the title "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" we now enclose further documents. Sequentially from the earlier items *Annexed* sent on 2nd September, I have labelled the enclosed Item 12 (A-H).

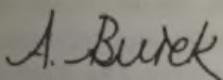
Each item shows our name and address as they have been officially recognised by various institutions for decades. The documents are:

- 12A Corporation Tax request
- 12B Rating List entry for the London Borough of Lambeth
- 12C Business Rates Instalment to the London Borough of Lambeth

- 12D British Telecom invoice
- 12E London Business Telephone Directory Entry
- 12F Thames Valley Water invoice
- 12G London Electricity invoice
- 12H British Gas invoice
- 12I Royal Mail registration/invoice

It will be of interest for us to learn whether the small group latterly passing off itself as 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain' from a private residential address (71 Ashbourne Court) in London N12 has extended its fraudulence to the point of registering itself with the Inland Revenue, local authority etc., or whether it has omitted to do so.

Yours faithfully,



Adam Buick
General Secretary

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK? OR ABOLITION OF THE WAGES SYSTEM?

Wages for housework is part of a broad reformist campaign by feminists to demand from the state the lifting of the burden of housework and childcare through for example, the provision of subsidised public laundries, community restaurants and nurseries. This is all clearly explained in S. Rowbotham's book **The Past is Before Us : Feminism in Action Since the 1960's** which demonstrates that all forms of feminism are political and that the demands by women's liberation groups can only be treated in political terms.

Women's liberation has long struggled for wages for women in housework and childcare. The **Wages For Housework Group** (1973) asserts:

"Wages for Housework offers independence and the dignity that comes from a recognition of one's efforts. It offers a choice of occupation for one's energies, a freedom to leave housework, to enter into a social instead of a privatised existence(...). It offers women the chance to relate to other people at a fully human level."

The journal published by the **Power of Women Collective** (1974) made a similar demand:

"We demand that employers and their government pay us for the work we do free. We want money of our own."

Twenty years later the Feminist Collective at King's Cross, London, still has wages for housework as their major objective. It is a futile political gesture, and shows no understanding of either capitalism or the role of the capitalist state.

In their campaign for wages for housework, feminists believe that they are at the cutting edge of revolutionary politics. Yet there is nothing revolutionary or radical in their proposals. The wages system is wage slavery, both for women and for men. It is degrading and unnecessary. The wages system allows the working class little control over their lives. Workers are forced to produce in a particular way for the employing class under their terms and conditions. What the workers produce is taken away from them by the employing class as the owners. The revolutionary proposal put by Socialists is instead to work for the abolition of the wages system, capitalism, and not for its retention under another form.

In the nineteenth century Marx had urged the workers to reject the conservative slogan of "*a fair day's wage for a fair day's work*", and to replace it with the demand for the abolition of the wages system, (see **Value, Price and Profit**). This demand to abolish the wages system is a political demand. This demand urges the workers away from just contesting the class struggle economically for better pay and conditions, and urges them to organise politically for Socialism against the capitalists and their agents. This political party must only have Socialism as its objective.

Marx had always seen Socialism as a society in which there would be no buying and selling, (including wages). In the **Communist Manifesto** he wrote that it involved "*the abolition of buying and selling of the bourgeois conditions of production*".

The implication of this revolutionary statement is the ending of buying and selling of a person's mental and physical abilities to work. There would be no labour market. Men and women would freely give their services to society. Co-operation would replace competition, and people would have free access to what they needed. They would be able to develop their potentials to the full as human beings.

The conservatism and backwardness of the Wages for Housework campaign should now be apparent. It is a campaign which, even if successful, would leave workers within an exploitative class system. It offers no solution to the social problems, like unemployment, facing workers today. It also evades the question of class and class struggle.

The Wages For Housework campaign is not Socialist and offers no route to freedom from class oppression. It is reformist and in order for it to work it would depend upon the goodwill of the capitalist class to pay for housework out of taxation. It will be long wait. When it comes to the question of taxation the capitalist class do not have much goodwill. The capitalists and their agents squabble and fight about who will bear the brunt of taxation while their political parties, Tory, Labour etc. try to pass the burden off from one section to another. The capitalist class is not a charity. Only if they see some benefit to their system would they consider such reform.

In fact these feminist groups are in a direct line of thinking from Proudhon to the Labour Party, whom many feminists support. They believe that the question of wages and salaries can be solved within capitalism through legislation. Marx already criticised This belief before the publication of the **Communist Manifesto**:

"What errors are committed by the advocates of piecemeal reform, who either want to raise wages and thereby improve the conditions of the working class, or (like Proudhon), regard equality of wages as the aim of social revolution"

(Quoted in McLellan's **Marx Before Marxism** Pelican page 214)

Later, Marx in the **Critique of the Gotha Programme** went on to make the valuable point that you cannot have socialist distribution within a social system whose objective is the anti social pursuit of profit:

"Vulgar Socialism has accepted as gospel from the bourgeois economists (and part of the democracy has taken over the doctrine from the unreflecting socialists) that the problem of distribution can be considered and treated independently of the mode of production, from which it is inferred that Socialism turns mainly on the question of distribution."

The error of both feminists and the Labour Party is to believe that you can retain capitalism and at the same time superimpose on it a socialist principle of distribution. You cannot do this. Capitalism requires that the workers shall work on terms which force them to produce a surplus for their employers. Feminists believe that the government can just tax away this surplus and distribute it to those who do the housework. However the state, whether controlled by Tory or Labour, has to administer capitalism in the interests of the capitalists to accumulate and expand capital. The state and the political parties are controlled by capitalist interests.

Look at, for example, the failure of past Labour administrations to raise the wages of the low paid. Employers either made low paid workers redundant or told them that if they received higher wages

then the firm would go bankrupt, and they would lose their jobs. A similar failure would occur in any legislation forcing payment for housework from employers. The enactment and the enforcement of legislation are not the same thing. When legislation is strictly enforced it is usually because it is particularly useful to the capitalists and their agents.

To attain independence, dignity and to relate to people at a fully human level requires Socialism **not** feminism. Socialism can only be established by a conscious majority of workers organised politically for the capture of the machinery of government. In her book S. Rowbotham takes a pessimistic view of the future of women's liberation:

".....women's liberation culture has not..., solved the problems of how this social force can change the existing framework of political power" (page 300).

Of course feminism cannot change the framework of political power. It is fragmentary and class divisive, and furthermore, it has no force, no direction and no future.

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
of 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road
London N12 8SB**

has no connection with the organisation of the same name of 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Any person wishing to send money should make cheques, POs etc payable to "**The Socialist Party of Great Britain**". If any person has mistakenly sent money to us intended for the Clapham organisation, we will refund this upon notification.

TAXES & THE WORKERS STANDARD OF LIVING

Argument about taxes and their effect on wage levels has been going on for a very long time. Over 200 years ago Adam Smith had the right idea. In his *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, he had a chapter with the title "Taxes upon the Wages of Labour". In it he showed that a tax on wages has to be paid by the employer. If we replace his assumption about wage levels with modern figures, (he assumed a wage of 50 pence a week), his example went like this. If with given market conditions and price levels, an employer cannot get the workers he needs at less than £240.00 per week, the effect of levying a tax of 20 pence in the pound would result in wages rising by 25 pence in the pound to £300.00. At £300.00 the deduction of 20 pence in the pound tax would leave the worker with the same "take home pay" as before, namely £240.00.

On 2nd May 1986 *The Times* had an article by Mr. Emile Woolf, author of a book advocating tax reforms. He quoted and accepted Adam Smith's case that it is the employer who has to pay the tax. His chief argument for the reform of the existing arrangement was that the tax burden hit small employers more heavily than it hit big and wealthy companies, and that there ought to be special arrangements to help small employers.

The Adam Smith argument was recalled at the time of the Crimean war in 1854. Then, and throughout the 19th century, there was no income tax on wages. A proposal was made that wages should be taxed to help pay for the war. After examination the proposal was dropped. It was pointed out that with unemployment at a very low

level, the attempt to levy a tax on wages would at once be followed by the workers demanding and getting a wage increase sufficient to leave their take home pay as before : the tax would be paid by the employers.

Karl Marx's theory explaining the origin of profit in surplus value leads to the same conclusion. It is in the production process, and the relationship of employer and employed that the workers are exploited. The wages employers pay are always as low as market conditions and the workers' resistance permit them to be. Any attempt by the government to reduce wages below that level by the imposition of a wages tax can only result in the employers having to pay it.

At its formation in 1904 **The Socialist Party of Great Britain** accepted the logic of the situation and urged the workers not to concern themselves with tax levels. In the **Socialist Standard** October 1904, an article was published with the title "The Bogey of the Taxes". It contained the following:

"It thus becomes evident that the taxes must be paid out of the surplus wealth extracted from the worker's by the capitalists; this explains not only the latter's interests in the question of taxation, but also why it is of small moment to the workers."

The position taken by the SPGB in 1904 was derided by the reformist political parties. The party took the same line over the question of high and low rates, showing that that burden too, falls on the owners, (see **Socialist Standard** June 1905 and October 1906). In recent years much has been written about what is called the decay of inner cities. It was already there in 1906. The following is taken from the **Socialist Standard** October 1906:

"But where the shoe really pinches may have been learnt during the past year from the great outcry raised by London property owners and their agents over the rising rates, which, they averred, caused residents and manufacturers to migrate to the outlying districts. Their cry was that high rates depreciated the value of their property".

Those who say that the workers have an interest in taxation and that higher taxes lower the workers' standard of living, extend the argument to prices and the workers' cost of living. They argue that high prices are bad for the workers. This argument takes in indirect taxes, that is taxes on the things workers buy, such as VAT, excise duty on alcohol, tobacco etc., and duties levied on imports. They argue that all indirect taxes correspondingly raise prices. The same people, or some of them, also maintain that a major cause of higher prices is wage increases.

The whole taxation issue resolves itself into the question; is it true that taxes on wages and high prices, lower the worker's standard of living and that low or no taxes on wages and low prices raise the workers' standard of living, and is it true that low or no taxes on wages and low prices raise the workers' standard of living? The facts over a long period show that it is not true.

The two chief factors which determine the workers' standard of living, are whether capitalism is in a phase of expansion and boom or in depression, and the effectiveness of trade union organisation. Of course, in recent depressions, large numbers of workers have had their standard of living lowered through unemployment. It is a simple matter to dispose of the view that high prices are caused by wage rises. In the period 1850 to 1914 the average wage of the

working class rose by about 90 per cent, but the price level in 1914 was almost exactly the same as in 1850. The rise in wages reflected the continued increase of total production and the size and effectiveness of trade union organisation.

The case is equally clear about the case of taxes on wages. Until 1914 only relatively few of the highest paid workers came within the scope of income tax. At the present time the great majority of workers come within the scope of PAYE and for many of them the tax rate is quite high. But the purchasing power of the take home pay of the working class as a whole is far above the pre 1914 level.

Is it true that falling prices raise the workers' standard of living? The only period of falling prices in this century was in the 1920s when the government decided to halt and reverse inflation. Prices came down by 34 per cent between 1920 and 1926 and by 47 per cent between 1920 and 1933. So were the workers better off? The average real wages of the working class in the years 1922 to 1926 was at least 5 per cent below the level of 1921. This happened because wages fell rather more than the falling prices. Men in manufacturing industry lost 11 per cent, and the coal miners suffered a 30 per cent lowering of their standard of living.

And what about the supposed adverse effects of rising prices? Prices have been raised continuously since 1938 under National, Labour and Tory governments, so that the price level in 1994 was about thirty six times what it was in 1938. However in the great majority of years since 1945 the average wages of the whole working class have risen more than prices. The workers' standard of living has gone up, not down. It is not taxation on wages or indirect taxes like VAT that should concern the working class, but

making full use of their organisations to maintain and increase wages. Above all it is in the interest of the working class to redirect their energies to secure the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism. As Marx put it, there will be no buying and selling and therefore no wages or profits or taxes.

CITIZEN OR SOCIALIST

In Mr. Major's Britain we are all supposed to be equal citizens. Even the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats are in favour of citizens and citizenship. However the concept of citizenship is spurious. Politicians try to depict capitalism as a society in which economically independent individuals enjoy equal rights. On the one hand, they praise the merits of private enterprise: the free market and competition, while on the other hand they disclaim against inequalities and social power. It is a dichotomy politicians cannot reconcile.

Rights and citizenship cannot be extended throughout society. Workers cannot have both a right to employment and a right to property. There is a need for employers to periodically dismiss workers when a depression prevents production taking place. Similarly, what a capitalist enjoys in terms of health care, education and general quality of life, is utterly different from the life experienced by millions of workers under capitalism.

The concept of class cannot just be dismissed. As private property owners, employers have economic power based on political force.

The machinery of government is controlled by the capitalist class and their agents. This social inequality cannot lead to a citizenship of equal rights.

Socialists aim to secure a society which enhances an individual's potential, or as Marx put it: "*The all round development of the individual*". Of course this will not come about under capitalism. The principle of economic competition and the anti social pursuit of profit and self interest are obstacles to co-operation and social harmony. The political programme to create a classless citizen is an ideal which cannot be realised in a class divided society.

Proponents of citizenship want everyone to enjoy equal rights, to acquire civic duties and to pursue actions for the common good. Yet these same proponents want a system based upon intense competition and self interest. The two do not mix. A system of economic competition; of winners and losers; of bankruptcy and unemployment is unable to provide all of society with an equal opportunity to lead a free and worthwhile existence. In capitalism the majority are losers. The consequences of commercial competition are crime, drugs, violence, social alienation and cultural impoverishment.

Consequently, Mr. Major's **Citizen's Charter** and the citizen ideal pursued by the Labour Party are misleading. Equal citizens cannot exist in a class divided society. Tensions and conflict will always rise to the surface. Social reality and the class struggle will always intervene.

A recent example of social reality intervening can be seen in the death of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. This proposed Act

of Parliament was estimated to cost British capitalism some £17 million along with a subsequent £1 billion a year. As a result the government had to kill the Bill because it was too expensive to implement despite the special needs arising from people with disabilities. The need of profit overrode social need. Under capitalism it is always this way. Governments cannot safeguard or propagate the rights of all of society. Only the class interest of those with social power can be safeguarded. As the Minister, Mr. Scott, said to the House of Commons:

"However sympathetic one is, you cannot impose that sort of cost on British business and industry without having widespread consultation with them on the impact that it is likely to have on their operations."

In its primary role as the defender of private property, the government is forced to consider all the interests which fall within this institution. The state, Labour or Tory, has to defend inequality of wealth and power. Human freedom cannot be secured by a network of legal rights and political liberties. Only Socialism based upon common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution can do this. It is only with the establishment of Socialism that freedom, community and co-operation can be finally realised.

"Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wages system"! (Value, Price and Profit, K. Marx chapter XIV)

THE TRADE UNIONS & THEIR LINKS WITH THE LABOUR PARTY

The trade unions have been much in the news of late, both in respect of their membership and their relations with the Labour party. **The Times** (5th September 1994) had an article with the ominous title "A once powerful force is in decline as industry and Labour seek new solutions to old problems". It contained figures of annual T.U.C. membership since 1979, which showed that after a slight increase between 1979 and 1980 there has been a reduction in each year, so that the T.U.C. membership in 1993 at 7,303,419 was 40 per cent lower than the 1980 total of 12,172,508 -- a loss of 4,869,089 members. The writer Philip Bassett, industrial editor of **The Times** had this to say:

"Union members are now a minority in the country's workforce...and most employers no longer recognise unions for the purpose of negotiating workers' pay".

Mr. Bassett uses for his article the membership of the T U C which is somewhat less than the total trade union membership. If he had used the latter figures the picture he presents of falling membership would be much the same. Between 1979 and 1992 T U C membership fell by 4,365,609; from 12,128,078 in 1979 to 7,762,469 in 1992 - a loss of 36 per cent. Total trade union membership fell from 13,289,000 in 1979 to 9,048,000 in 1992 - a loss of 4,041,000 or 32 per cent. Mr. Bassett explains the fall as being the outcome of government policy which sees "*future growth in employment*" as being dependent on "*workers being freed from the tyranny of constraint imposed by trade unions*". What the article entirely fails to do is to look back into the past for a similar fall

of union membership, caused not by government action, but by a big increase in unemployment comparable with the increase during recent years when the registered unemployed went over three million.

Unemployment was very high in the 1920s, with the consequence that total trade union membership fell from 8.3 million to 4.8 million between 1920 and 1930, (42 per cent). When unemployment declined after 1930 trade union membership increased again year by year right up to 1979. In late 1994 unemployment is falling again, from its peak of over 3m, and if it continues to fall it can be confidently expected that trade union membership will rise again to past peak levels. Indeed Mr. Bassett's article contains statements by general secretaries of two big unions saying that their memberships are increasing.

In the meantime the past very close relationship between the T.U.C. and the Labour Party has come in for some relaxation. Mr. Tony Blair, Labour Party leader dealt with it in the following terms:

"New leader Tony Blair has already signalled that the unions will not be able to command special status or expect favours from a Labour government, and predecessor John Smith's axing of the trade union block vote influence in party policy was a milestone". (Evening Standard 5th September 1994)

Mr. David Blunkett, Labour Party Chairman, spoke at the T.U.C. about the changed relationship and explained in carefully chosen words what lies behind it; which is that close links with the T.U.C. make it harder for the Labour Party to win elections and become the government.

He said that every time "*Labour supported those at the 'lower end of the ladder', the Tories had complained about the party's links with the unions*", and that loosening the link would therefore help the Labour Party "*to improve its chances of taking power*".

He told the trade union delegates that "*you as trade unionists do not expect or need favours from us*". In line with this definition of the Labour Party's more detached attitude Labour's Tony Blair would not openly back the signal worker's strike then going on. (**Evening Standard** 6th September 1994)

It all makes political sense for the Labour Party. That party along with the Tories and Liberal Democrats etc. has the obligation when it becomes the government, to say that it will solve the problems of unemployment, poverty, adverse balance of trade etc. necessarily thrown up by the capitalist system to which they are committed.

The only way of ridding society of capitalism's problems is to abolish capitalism and go over to Socialism-- a revolutionary course for which neither the Tories, Liberal Democrats nor the Labour Party seek a mandate.

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NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH

meets at 7.30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Mondays in month at
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Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
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CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at
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Correspondence to the Secretary, S.P.G.B., 31 Caernarvon Road,
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Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities
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Subjects will include

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